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ABSTRACT

Too many four-year colleges and universities have failed to develop policies for recognizing knowledge gained outside four-year college programs. Several universities are, however, beginning to respond to the needs of adult learners with years of experiential learning (EL), especially that acquired through work experience or on-the-job training. One such institution is Wayland Baptist University, which since 1976 has offered a bachelor of science in occupational education that provides up to 12 semester hours of credit for EL. Institutions desiring to offer bachelor degree programs that are articulated with community college programs must begin by developing an articulation plan that has been carefully designed to meet accrediting agency criteria. This requires adherence to the following criteria: decisions regarding the awarding of credit must be made by qualified faculty; sources of credit must be sufficiently documented to ensure that credits are academically comparable to credit earned by traditional means; credit is awarded only for documented EL that ties the experience to the academic field; steps must be taken to ensure that credit for EL does not duplicate credit already awarded or courses required for the degree; and the institution must clearly show the validity of awarding credits and the evaluation criteria by which judgments are made. (MN)

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ARTICULATION OF TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WITH BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMS

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ARTICULATION OF TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WITH BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMS

"I spent three years while I was employed full time taking classes in the evening to complete my associate degree. You mean most of the credits I received will not transfer to a bachelor's degree program? Have I wasted my time? No one told me the credits would not transfer."

"I have 15 years experience as a manager. I have attended more than two dozen week-long management training programs. Isn't this a valid source of college credit? If I can document this experience and training, why should I be required to complete a principles of management course?"

THE PROBLEM

These are all too familiar sentiments heard frequently by counselors in four-year higher educational institutions. Why aren't four-year institutions more interested in responding to the needs of people who have years of education, training and experience?

One of the central messages of a new report from the Southern Regional Education Board's Commission for Educational Quality, entitled Changing States: Higher Education and the Public Good, is that colleges and universities change too slowly. Officials need to listen and respond more fully to customer needs (Gerald L. Baliles, former Governor of Virginia and Chairman, Southern Regional Education Board, 1994). The unnecessary duplication of education and training, and the recognition of non-traditional sources of college credits are changes that are long overdue.

SOME EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

Since 1976, Wayland Baptist University has offered a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Education Degree which provides up to 12 semester hours of credit for work experience, credits for military schools, and credits for training related to the student's prior work experiences. In addition, a student may transfer up to 72 semester hours of credit from an accredited community college, including credits from all technical-vocational programs if these credits apply toward degree requirements. This is especially appealing to working adults, and Wayland considers their time, job constraints and commitment to families by providing courses at night and during weekends--**a work to school transition**. Research has shown that over 62 percent of the traditional college students now work at least part time, and that 76 percent of the students felt that the work experience added to the educational experience (National Association of Student Employment Administrators, Journal of Student Employment, 1993).

Similar programs are also available at the University of Texas-Tyler, Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Corpus Christi State University, and Abilene Christian University. Southern Illinois University-Carbondale offers programs at several military installations, including Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque and Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Many institutions, such as the University of California and the California State University System, have programs which are articulated with community college technical-vocational programs (Stanley, Morse and Kellett, 1992). The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board mandates the transferability of many lower division academic courses across two- and four-year institutions. However, many "upper tier" universities refuse credits from technically

oriented degree programs. Few, if any, of the larger universities recognize credit for work experience and job-related training.

A TYPICAL DEGREE PLAN

The Wayland degree plan has evolved over 18 years. The BSOE degree requires 124 semester hours of credit. An academic foundation block requires 43 semester hours, including English, computer competency, history, government, speech, math, and science. A language course may also substitute for one math or science course. A specialization (major) field requires 36 semester hours, which may be applied from technical-vocational programs, training, or other non-traditional sources. A professional development area of 36 semester hours is used to support the career needs of the individual. Twelve of the credits may be applied from documented work experience. Finally, an elective block requires 9 semester hours of credit, and may be applied from training, testing, or transfer credits.

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN ARTICULATED PROGRAMS?

Articulated programs are designed to meet the needs of the student. This means that degree plans are personalized, which requires yeoman work on the part of college personnel. The degree must be designed to accommodate the diversity of student needs. Built in options are needed. With these options, however, are specific requirement that must be met to complete a degree.

A carefully designed bachelor degree program will provide a natural articulation plan for community college associate of applied science degrees and certificate programs. The degree plan is the articulation plan. The community college and four year institution counselors need to know each other's degree plans, and how credits articulate. One way to maximize communication between the two- and four-year institutions is for the four-year institution to host candidates for the associate degree, with their advisor. At this meeting, a personalized bachelor degree plan, which shows articulated courses, experiential learning and job training, along with credits needed for the bachelor degree, would be developed.

A plan to articulate programs should have these elements:

1. The Need Described
2. The Purpose Defined
3. The People Involved
4. The Promise Delivered
5. The Power Demonstrated

ACCREDITING AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

A non-traditional bachelor degree does have it's requirements. First, a bachelor degree normally requires at least 124 semester hours of credits. Secondly, approximately 30 semester hours must be completed from the four year institution awarding the degree. Thirdly, a bachelor degree will require approximately 52 non-junior college credits. And, a bachelor degree will require from 21 to 42 upper level credits, usually in the major field. Students who are interested in graduate work should complete as many upper level requirements as possible. Since about one-third of bachelor degree graduates will pursue a master degree, it is also important for students to complete levelling courses required for the graduate degree.
A college/university accrediting agency is "principally concerned with the improvement of educational quality through-out the region and the assurance to the public that regional

institutions meet established standards." (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1993). Therefore, institutions which articulate various sources of non-traditional credits must follow accrediting agency criteria. This requires adherence to the following criteria:

1. Decisions regarding the awarding of credit must be made by qualified faculty. Wayland has a BSOE Committee comprised of faculty members from the various divisions from which courses are offered.
2. Sources of credit must be sufficiently documented to assure that credits are academically comparable to credit earned by traditional means.
3. Credit is awarded only for documented experiential learning which ties the experience to the academic field.
4. Steps must be taken to ensure that credit for experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded or courses required for the degree.
5. The institution must clearly show the validity of awarding credits, and the evaluation criteria by which judgements are made.

One possible danger is that requirements for the non-traditional degree may become so rigid that it is no different than a traditional degree, and the non-traditional degree looses it value.

SUMMARY

If there is a will, there's a way to articulate technical-vocational education, training, work experience and other non-traditional sources of credits. Programs already may be in place in your community. Aggressive leadership is needed to rally working adults, technical-vocational educators, and university officials for the purpose of more fully meeting the higher education needs of the community. And, any plans for articulation must be carefully designed to meet accrediting agency criteria, without which the plan would be useless. Assistance is available from those who have already travelled this road.